

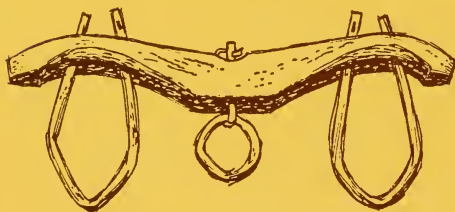
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Was Abraham Lincoln an  
Honest man?

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# The Association News

*Published in the interest of The General Daniel Davidson Bidwell Memorial Association*

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Number 2

## WAS ABRAHAM LINCOLN AN HONEST MAN?

By ORRA L. FITCH, Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania, President Pennsylvania-Ohio Chapter

William Herndon, Lincoln's last law partner, who was responsible for first putting in circulation the story of the traditional Abraham Lincoln-Ann Rutledge romance, wrote a letter of inquiry on December 20, 1866 to Rev. James Smith, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, Illinois, from 1849 to 1856, which church the Lincoln Family attended, inquiring: "Was Abraham Lincoln an Honest Man?"

Mr. Smith's answer was as follows:

Early in December an article went the rounds of the papers purporting to be a lecture delivered by you on Abraham Lincoln's life and past history which I read with mingled feelings of indignation and sorrow, because coming as it did from his law partner, it was calculated to do the character of that great and good man an incalculable injury, deeply to wound the feelings of his heart-broken widow, and to place that whole family both the living and the dead, in a most uneveivable light before the public. In the article referred to, speaking of the death and grave of Miss Ann Rutledge, you represent Mr. Lincoln as having said: "That his heart, sad and broken, was buried there." You give it as your opinion that he never addressed another woman as "yours affectionately," that "he generally and characteristically abstained from the use of the word, 'Love' that he never ended his letters 'yours affectionately,' but always signed them 'your friend, Abraham Lincoln.'"

Now, sir, I maintain that every reflecting person who believes your statements

to be true is bound to reply to your question, Abraham Lincoln was not an honest man for he assiduously and perseveringly sued for the life of a young lady, who was much admired for her intelligence, her fine conversational powers, and capability of making herself, very agreeable in any circle, and who could if so disposed have wedded with the first of the land. This he did when according to you all he had to give in return was a dead heart buried in the grave of another woman and he was in such a mental condition that he had to abstain from the use of the word love. Therefore, when that young lady accepted his suit and promised to become his wife he could not even go so far as to say "I am yours affectionately." Nay, more; when Abraham Lincoln led his bride to the hymeneal altar, immediately before that bond was tied which death alone can dissolve, he most solemnly promised before God and man to be to her a faithful, loving and affectionate husband, when according to you he had neither love or affection to bestow.

He was often absent from his family and no doubt wrote his wife many letters. According to you he never ended any of these letter "yours affectionately," but always "your friend, Abraham Lincoln," an insult which every lady of feeling and spirit would resent, and I must say, your statements being true, to me it is strange that the lady to whom these letters were addressed, who you know as well as I do, possesses exquisite sensibility, spirit and high sense of honor, not only did not resent the first insult of that sort,

but patiently and silently submitted to the repetition of it from month to month and from year to year. And what a cold-hearted man he must have been who for many years thus treated the wife of his bosom whom he had solemnly promised to love and cherish. Your statements also contain a most cruel and malignant attack upon his heart-broken widow, as one for whom the husband entertained no love, no affection. Sir, was it not enough that she should be overwhelmed and stricken to the earth by the dreadful blow which had fallen upon her in the cruel death of her husband, but you must come on the scene and mingle your poison chalice into that cup of woe which she must drink even to the dregs?

A law office is by no means the best field for judging the characters of each other by those who are brought in contact there. No, sir, it is in the family circle the man exhibits himself as he really is, his bearing toward his wife, his treatment of his children, and dependents, his free and easy conversation with those who are admitted into that circle. There are to be found the tests by which a man's character and feelings are to be determined, and no one enjoys better opportunities to be enabled to put a proper estimate upon the members of it than the pastor who is respected and esteemed by them; who has buried their dead and baptized their living; who in seasons of sorrow has administered to them those consolations which the Gospel of the Son of God can alone communicate. Such was the position occupied by your humble servant in the family of Abraham Lincoln, to say nothing of his calls upon myself, and our pleasant conversations in drives across the prairies.

During seven years when he and myself were at home scarcely two weeks ever passed during which I did not spend a pleasant evening in the midst of that family circle, and my intercourse with himself there convinced me that Abraham Lincoln was not only an honest man, but pre-eminently an upright man

ever ready so far as in his power to render unto all men their just dues, and that he was utterly incapable of withholding from the bride he led to the altar what was her due, by giving her a heart which was dead and buried in the grave of another, but that in the deep and honest sincerity of his soul he gave her a heart overflowing with love and affection; and my intercourse with him and his family left the abiding impression upon my mind, by his demeanor to her, that he was to the wife of his bosom a most loving and affectionate husband; who would on no occasion have insulted her by sending her a letter closing with "your friend, Abraham Lincoln." I do most solemnly testify that during my repeated visits I never saw a frown upon his brow or heard him utter a harsh or unkind word to his lady or any of his children, but seemed overflowing with geniality, good humor, and kindness—clear proof of his love and affection.

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Mary Todd Lincoln was a wide and discriminating reader with a fair command of French and German and among the books she drew from the Congressional Library during her occupancy of the White House from 1861 to 1865 were the works of Victor Hugo, Honore de Balzac, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, Johann Paul Friedrich Richter, August Wilhelm von Schegel, the essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the tales of Sir Walter Scott, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Dickens, Benjamin Disraeli, and Charles Kingsley.

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It is not necessary to review in detail Mrs. Lincoln's faults as they have been constantly paraded before us, and we are all familiar with them. That her mind broke in later years is unquestioned. But the beating she took from fortune's blows was enough to drive any woman insane. The wonder is not that her mind broke under the strain, but that it held up as well as it did.



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## HOW MARY TODD LINCOLN SUPPORTED HER HUSBAND

Mary Todd Lincoln stood loyally by her husband's side in his great tribulations in life and she fell in anguish on her knees before him in the hour of death. When all seemed dark and he would brood over some defeat she would inspire him with a courage that would not down. Her faith in him was unshakable. She recognized his greatness when others could not see it. She predicted for him triumphs of which he himself did not dare. But in the face of public hostility when she made these predictions, she was laughed at and jeered. When Lincoln returned home from Congress in 1849 he was discredited in the eyes of his constituents. While in Congress he had sought to make an issue of the spot where the Mexican War had started. Nine years later, in debate with him at Ottawa, Illinois, Stephen Arnold Douglas openly charged: "Whilst in Congress Lincoln distinguished himself by his opposition to the Mexican War, \* \* \* and when he returned home, he found that the indignation of the people followed him everywhere, and he was submerged and obliged to retire into private life forgotten by his former friends." Even Lincoln at the time thought that his political star had set. As a final act to salvage what he could from the wreckage, he sought to be appointed commissioner of the land office. But so low was Lincoln then appraised by his party, that this appointment was refused him. Finally as a reward for party services, he was considered for the territorial governorship of Oregon, an inferior post. Lincoln was inclined to accept, for he thought it was the best he could get. Discouraged about his political fortune, Lincoln was ready now to quit the blasted heath and seek greener fields. But his wife flatly refused to consider it because she had more faith in him than he had in himself. And because of her courage and fighting spirit, for which this country is forever indebted to her, there they stayed and battled it out

instead of running away. She knew the road to success was up the hill before him, and not down the grade behind him. When he was defeated for the Senate by Douglas in 1858 and others said, "Old Abe is thru," she defiantly reared her head and said he would be President. And when at last he reached that exalted station and the Confederate Army under General Jubal Anderson Early in July 1864 marched to the gates of Washington, and others fled the city for safety, no amount of persuasion could induce her to leave her husband's side.

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From William Osborn Stoddard's book, "Inside the White House in War Times," published in 1887, we learn that Mrs. Lincoln paid many visits to hospitals and soldiers camps, but rarely took others with her. The wise and practical Secretary to the President took mental note of these opportunities lost. If she were wordly-wise, she would have carried newspaper correspondents, from two to five, of both sexes, every time she went, and she would have had them take shorthand notes of what she said to the sick soldiers and what the sick soldiers said to her. Then she would have brought the writers back to the White House, and given them some cake and coffee and shown them the conservatory. Here was a chance to advertise herself as an angel of mercy and warm those hearts that had grown cold against her. But not Mrs. Lincoln. Whether of ethics or failure to sense the opportunity, we do not know.

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The Association News is published periodically in the interest of The General Daniel Davidson Bidwell Memorial Association, which is striving to erect at Buffalo, New York, an equestrian statue of General Daniel Davidson Bidwell, killed in the battle of Cedar Creek, October 19, 1864. Address all communications to Eugenia Campbell Bidwell, 6858 Paxton Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

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## NO MONEY

February 27th Governor Herbert H. Lehman signed the annual appropriation bill of \$386, 364,615 for the ordinary expenses of the State from July 1, 1938 to June 30, 1939. There have been many other special appropriation bills passed by the Legislature altho there is no money for a Memorial to General Daniel Davidson Bidwell in Buffalo.

The expenses of the 1915 Constitutional Convention amounted to \$1,190,837, yet the 1915 proposed Constitution was defeated in November 1915 by 510,041 majority and failed to carry a single county in the State. The Legislature has appropriated \$1,350,000 for the 1938 Constitutional Convention and if the proposed Constitution is defeated in November 1938 the \$1,350,000 will have been a waste of money the same as the \$1,190,837 was a waste of money in 1915.

Quite a racket has grown up in the last few years during the closing hours of the Legislature to appropriate money for legislative investigations into this, that, and everything under the sun.

Under supervision of Professor Edwin W. Patterson of Columbia University the State Insurance Department was making a revision of the insurance law. In 1937 the Legislature took this work away from the State Insurance Department and created a legislative committee with an appropriation of \$20,000 to do the work. This year the Legislature has continued this legislative committee with an appropriation of \$30,000 to investigate industrial insurance altho the State Insurance Department has 136 examiners who are better qualified to investigate industrial insurance than any legislative committee.

To investigate cost of producing and marketing greenhouse products.....	\$12,000
To make a study of business taxes.....	15,000
To continue study of mortgage moratorium problems.....	40,000
To investigate profit-sharing in industry.....	15,000
To regulate beauty parlors.....	30,000
To continue investigation of juvenile delinquency, altho \$15,000 was spent for this purpose last year.....	15,000
To continue investigation means of better care for deaf children, altho \$5,000 was spent for this purpose last year.....	20,000
To investigate damage done by insects in forest areas.....	25,000
To investigate better formation stock in dairy cattle.....	30,000
To investigate melon culture.....	5,000
To continue investigation of administration of justice, altho \$30,000 was spent for this purpose last year.....	17,500
To make a study of statutes regulating promotion of public health.....	50,000
To mobilize national guard at opening of New York World's Fair.....	10,000
To study problems of the Delaware River Basin.....	7,500
For an exhibit at World Poultry Congress at Cleveland, Ohio.....	15,000
To continue study of mandatory automobile insurance.....	25,000
For interstate co-operation.....	25,000
To continue investigation into causes of unemployment of persons over 40 years of age, altho \$25,000 was spent for this purpose last year.....	25,000
To study election laws and recommend changes.....	20,000
For celebration in honor of Governor George Clinton.....	5,000
For a sesqui-centennial celebration of the Constitution.....	30,000
For a celebration commemorating the breaking of the Hindenburg line.....	2,000
For a pleasure trip to the San Francisco World's Fair for ten legislators and five appointees of the Governor.....	125,000

And yet there is no money for a Memorial to one who threw out his life as a ransom, at the time of our Nation's greatest jeopardy, for the preservation of the Union and the destruction of slavery.









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